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Vampiric Narratives:

Constructing Authenticity in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

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When Shakespeare's Polonius declares: 'This above all: to thine ownself be true', he omits the complexity of the search for an authentic Self, simplifying it in distinct terms of 'the night' and 'the day' (*Hamlet* I.3.78-79). The image of the Self as a developing individual and psychological construct, however, is not so simple to define. Rather, it is a constructed image that gains legitimacy and recognition from a history of reinforced perspectives. As Slavoj Žižek writes, 'The experience that we have of our lives from within, the story we tell ourselves about ourselves in order to account for what we are doing, is fundamentally a lie—the truth lies outside, in what we do' (*Violence* 47). In this formulation, the construction of the Self relies on an internal perspective that reinforces an image that may or may not be rooted reality but idealized for comfort and familiarity. When challenged by an opposing or outside gaze, the authenticity of the Self is compromised. To counteract this threat, the Self must regain or re-imagine its identity. The threat to identity intensifies when this cross-examination is triggered by an intimate Other, a more shadowy self that is personified in Freud's uncanny double.

Using Bram Stoker's *Dracula* as a textual tool, this essay will explore not only the authentication of the Self and its subsequent deconstruction when confronted by its Other, but will also discuss how such a confrontation and the search for authenticity and authority are fashioned and perpetuated in the construction of personal histories. Acknowledging this presence illuminates the larger implications of the anxieties surrounding the unstable construction of the Self and its complex, sometimes contradictory, relationship to its long-repressed Other(s). This essay will begin by examining the Self as a psychological construct that initially seeks the affirmation established by the existence of its mirroring double figure. The Gothic novel intuitively gives voice to the repressed and in so doing, confronts the Self with its uncanny double, a

reflection which the Self perceives as a threat to its own existence. This engagement of the uncanny as a device of the Gothic transforms the familiar into the unfamiliar, and, consequently, the psychological authentication of identity experiences a series of oscillations between the Self and the Other that leads to an identity crisis. This confusion is rooted in the confrontation between two estranged figures struggling to establish one as the authentic Self.

Using Žižek's notion of parallax and Edward Said's seminal Orientalist critiques, this essay applies ideas of crisis within the Self as a fractured identity to a wider fracturing of the cultural and collective consciousness. Specifically, it aims to explore how the discourses of 'invasion literature' and of 'new imperialism' might illuminate the West's need to retain authentic narratives regarding the empire when it becomes subject to invasion. I argue that in *Dracula*, the mimicry that once facilitated the assimilation of Western culture in a colonized 'Eastern Other' now, in a counter-invasion, becomes a frighteningly familiar recognition of the colonial Self, in a damning portrayal of the vampiric nature of imperial exploits. The uncanny Eastern presence threatens to destroy the West at its most vulnerable colonial epicenter—London. The physical traversals that Harker and Dracula make between the East (Transylvania) and the West (London) represent both a national battle between physical borders and a psychological struggle between the Self and its dark double. *Dracula*, then, becomes a narrative reflection of social and psychological anxieties that threaten the personal identities of the Western characters. The novel further reflects the larger cultural and collective anxieties about the construction of the East and the West and the blurring boundaries between them. The ambiguity between the former binaries not only defamiliarizes the figure of the Eastern Other but also causes the identity of the Western Self to become unstable. Freud writes that the very nature of the uncanny emulates 'that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar' (Freud 124). The idea of the uncanny as both a disturbing and affirming phenomena demonstrates its dual nature. Thus, in exploring the Self's two-faced reflection, an appropriate place to begin is with a personification of the familiar strange represented by Freud's dark double.

In *The Uncanny* (1919), Freud identifies the ‘double’ as a particularly unsettling spectre that engages the uncanny. The interaction between the Self and the double reveals a relationship that ‘is intensified by the spontaneous transmission of mental processes from one of these persons to the other ... so that the one becomes co-owner of the other’s knowledge, emotions and experience’ (Freud 141-142). He adds, ‘a person may identify himself with another and so become unsure of his true self; or he may substitute the other’s self for his own. The self may thus be duplicated, divided and interchanged’ (142). At first, this figure is an affirming presence for the Self. The mirroring reflection the double provides is ‘a defence against annihilation’; indeed, Freud states that the ‘double was originally an insurance against the extinction of the self’ (142). In this way, the familiar gaze that the double provides, both in its physical imitations and its parallel mental processes, legitimizes the perception of the Self. Yet, as one develops beyond the primitive stage where survival takes precedent over self-actualization, ‘the meaning of the ‘double’ changes: having once been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death’ (142). Where once an image of the Self was clear and affirmed, it becomes blurred and unstable. It is ‘duplicated, divided and interchanged’ (142).

Consequently, the Self desires dislocation from the reflection of its double, because it is challenged by the traces of its own primitive reflection. Only through separation, Freud states, can the Self engage in a cross-examination of this shadowy figure without assuming a level of self-incrimination: in an act of ‘psychical censorship ... it becomes isolated’ (142). This isolation creates a power dynamic whereby the Self acts as a dislocated authority who can act as an agent of judgment:

The existence of such an authority, which can treat the rest of the ego as an object—the fact that, in other words, man is capable of self-observation—makes it possible to imbue the old idea of the double with new content and attribute a number of features to it—above all, those which, in the light of self-criticism, seem to belong to the old, superannuated narcissism of primitive times ... the double is a creation that belongs to a primitive phase in our development, a phase

we have surmounted, in which it admittedly had a more benign significance. The double has become an object of terror'. (142-143)

This terror derives from a perceived threat of mental degeneration that reflects a regression toward a primitive ego. Also threatened is the image of the Self which faces deconstruction when challenged by the image of the Other. Thus, the act of distancing one's identity from an oppositional figure like the dark double is imperative for recovering one's autonomous identity. The tensions between reality and fantasy in this construction are particularly relevant and uniquely positioned in the Gothic novel. Indeed, its generic preoccupations with psychological anxieties and the repressed provide a particular approach to exploring the blurred lines between fantasy and reality, ultimately resulting in a deeper exploration of the psychological processes. One of the agents of this exploration within the genre is the uncanny. Freud attributes a particular definition of the uncanny as it relates to literature:

The uncanny we find in fiction—in creative writing, imaginative literature—actually deserves to be considered separately. It is above all much richer than what we know from experience; it embraces the whole of this and something else besides, something that is wanting in real life. The distinction between what is repressed and what is surmounted cannot be transferred to the uncanny in literature without substantial modification, because the realm of the imagination depends its validity on its contents being exempt from the reality test. (155-156)

In Gothic literature specifically, there is a supernatural element that allows the reader to embrace this richer experience. Rosemary Jackson writes in *Fantasy: the Literature of Subversion* that the uncanny 'is a term recurring time after time throughout nineteenth-century fantasy' (64). It provides a space for the muted, repressed and abject perspectives that are often dislocated from reality as purely fictitious. However, as Freud states, the uncanny in literature depends upon this exemption from 'reality'. The tensions between the world of the imaginary and of the real confront characters within the Gothic novel, forcing them to negotiate a dialectic reality and a fragmented Self. Jackson further states that the function of the uncanny, particularly as it appears in fantastic literature, is to 'uncover all that needs to remain hidden if the world is to be comfortably known' (65).

Consequently, to surmount the uncanny in literature, the characters often revert to familiar texts in an effort to counteract the competing realities the uncanny presents. Freud, too, is aware of the comfort repetition provides, noting that 'In the unconscious mind we can recognize the dominance of a *compulsion to repeat*, which proceeds from instinctual impulses' (145). Similarly, Deleuze locates the unconscious as a fertile ground for repetition, one that facilitates a condition he cites as the enabler of a specific, desired behavior:

I do not repeat because I repress. I repress because I repeat; I forget because I repeat. I repress, because I can live certain things or certain experiences only on the mode of repetition. I am determined to repress whatever will prevent me from living them thus. (Deleuze 18)

While captive in Count Dracula's castle, Harker surrounds himself in the familiarity that objective and personal texts provide. He quotes from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, emphasizing the need, not just the desire, to record the horrors unfolding before him:

Let me be calm, for out of that way lies madness indeed. I begin to get new lights on certain things which have puzzled me. Up to now I never quite knew what Shakespeare meant when he made Hamlet say:--

'My tablets! Quick, my tablets!

'tis meet that I put it down,' etc.,

for now, feeling as though my own brain was unhinged or as if the shock had come which must end in its undoing, I turn to my diary for repose. The habit of entering accurately must help to soothe me. (Stoker 40)

Whatever comfort the familiarity of these texts offers, objects that instill familiarity with the dark double only create anxiety. Thus, in confronting the uncanny double, one must repress all associations with this shadowy figure, even if doing so requires a return to the instinctual and degenerative behavior the Self attempts to avoid. As it threatens to reveal the lingering traces of the primitive Self, the double, now exposed, must once again be repressed or re-imagined. In so doing, one can restore his or her position of authority over the double and maintain the legitimacy of his or her own narrative. *Dracula* achieves this surmounting of the primitive Other through its reliance upon personal and

collective narrative as a means to legitimize identity. This is primarily achieved in its epistolary narrative structure. Paul Murray writes that this form, which was popular throughout the eighteenth century in narratives such as *Humphrey Clinker*, *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, was a ghost Stoker resurrected with the publication of *Dracula* (168). Notably, the opening chapter is presented through entries in Jonathan Harker's journal, including a note that is kept in shorthand, dated 3 May and written from Bistritz (Stoker 1). The specificity of the medium, the date and the place of the account act as validating components in the construction of its message. Moreover, the characters also demonstrate a keen preoccupation with accuracy by recording the entire experience, a practice demonstrated early in the novel.

Murray attributes the novel's 'credibility' to 'the use of multiple narrators employing seemingly objective documents' (168). Harker's reliance upon his diary to bring order to the chaos of his thoughts reveals reliance in general upon narrative to act as a tool of reason and as a strategy for construction, cohesion and legitimation. Before the Enlightenment, the 'story of empire' framed the inexplicable and unknowable danger that existed outside the consciousness and physical borders of its subjects and homelands. The West relied on the authenticity of travel narratives written by well-respected explorers and imperial agents to construct a reality beyond European shores. Moreover, the narrative of nationalism that legitimized these constructions was one that required dismantling other inferior cultures to achieve its own edification. Thus, Harker assumes this authoritative and familiar position of travel guide to narrate his unfamiliar surroundings and diminish the power Dracula has over him while located in unfamiliar spaces.

Harker turns to older narratives, like *Hamlet*, for a prescribed and acceptable response to the unknown. Instinctually, and to some extent, compulsively, he records what occurs as a way of domesticating it. Yet, this recordation does not result in understanding and therefore a recovery of the familiar. Instead, his paranoia grows. In place of introspection or direct confrontation with the terror, Harker writes letters:

I have written the letters. Mina's is in shorthand, and I simply ask Mr. Hawkins to communicate with her. To her I have explained my situation, but without the horrors which I may only surmise. It would shock and frighten her to death were I to expose my heart to her. Should the letters not carry, then the Count shall not yet know my secret or the extent of my knowledge ... (Stoker 46)

Harker then befriends a local Szgany who acts as the courier, but shortly after the exchange Dracula enters the study where his guest is reading to inform his guest that both letters have been read and that only Mr. Hawkins' will be sent on as it is a personal correspondence. The narrative constructed for Western eyes has been hijacked by its Eastern Other. The last signifier of control Harker possessed while captive, that of the narrative of his experience, has failed him. Moreover, he awakens hours later to find the remainder of his texts, including journals and notes, have disappeared:

Every scrap of paper was gone, and with it all my notes, my memoranda relating to railways and travel, my letter of credit, in fact all that might be useful to me were I once outside the castle. (Stoker 47)

Harker loses all traces of contextual relevance without his papers. For centuries, colonized cultures faced the same dilemma. Outside of the travel narratives of imperial servants, native peoples were non-existent, relevant only to the extent that they appeared within the texts and contexts of empire.

The absence of a history or context is a dilemma of the Subaltern that Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak discusses in 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography'. Therein, she states that the reliance upon a 'peasant consciousness' allows for a stabilizing mechanism whereby the Truth can be revealed. Moreover, 'within the post-Enlightenment tradition that the collective participates in as interventionist historians, consciousness is *the* ground that makes all disclosures possible' (Spivak 202). However, Spivak adds that this recapturing of the Subaltern's consciousness can never escape the shadows of its former oppressors. Thus, contextualization of the Other is limited to its authoritative spectres. Although Harker is by no means a Subaltern figure in the story, the disconnection with his narratives, those that provide context and maintain his position of power over his Eastern other, cause an internal crisis that must be restored. This

reconstruction is not based upon the truth but upon the perpetuation of Eastern stereotypes and the exploitation of Dracula's own narratives. Unlike the Subaltern, history favors the consciousness he wishes to restore, that of the Western gaze. Stripped of the power to record the 'accurate' history of what he encounters within the purview of a foreign setting, Harker struggles to accept the power-shift at play.

Months later and miles away, Harker's fiancé, Mina Murray, records her own disillusionment with the accuracy of narrative and one's inability to perceive its authenticity. In her journal, she recalls an encounter she and her friend, Lucy Westenra, have with a gravedigger called Mr. Swales, a conversation she specifically states she must remember and record. He argues that legends are nothing but ways to control other people and were:

all invented by parsons an' some illsome beuk-bodies an' railway touters to skeer and scunner hafflin's, an' to get folks to do somethin' that they don't other incline to do [...] Why it's them that, not content with printin' lies on paper an' preachin' them out of pulpits, does want to be cuttin' them on the tombstones. (Stoker 72)

After a debate about whether all tombstones are merely dishonest objects that people hope to take with them on Judgment Day, Mina concludes that the other plausible function of the tombstone is 'to please their relatives' (Stoker 73). Both Mr. Swales and Mina make keen observations regarding the symbolic effects of epitaphs. Like legends, they serve to frame a life, the story of an individual, and to give it a particular purpose that is contained and final. One rarely speaks of his or her own legacy; rather, it is created by others for retelling.

Deleuze calls these repetitions masks, layers of narrative that anticipate a distinctive origin but generate only more layers (17). The Deleuzian mask creates authority through repetition; it is an epitaph of a false history. Such commemorations serve best those that are left behind, namely the living who need a narrative to make sense of what often surrounds myth and death—the supernatural. When it is revealed that Dracula robs graves to gather his army of the Un-Dead, he not only steals their physical vessels, but also he robs their loved ones of their commemorations. Mina's assertion that some of the

tombstones must be accurate, even if some lives are portrayed falsely, again, betrays the anxiety for accuracy required, even in death, which is synecdochic of Enlightenment rationality. Mr. Swales leaves the two women to consider the conversation (Stoker 75). In this way, he functions as an agent of time who has called to question the accuracy of narratives from age to age. He is the personification of the effects of time upon histories and the authenticity of the hallowed ground upon which both people and groups erect monuments of memory.

In this scene, the uncanny corrupts Mina's familiarity with the epitaph by suggesting, through the character of Mr. Swales, that the identity inscribed on the tombstones does not reflect the dead. Instead, epitaphs reflect the *living*, acting as both illuminating and incriminating mirrors. What is written mirrors the reflection of the inscriber and his or her own motivations and anxieties rather than of the deceased. Consequently, on many of the tombstones, the lies that allow the living to go on living as they do act as a kind of uncanny double. Mina admits that these messages are narratives constructed to please others, and in this case, the others are the Self. Thus, another uncanny presence in the graveyard scene is the reflexive relationship between life and death that mirrors the complex constructions between Self and Other. As Jackson writes of Gothic tales such as *Dracula*, their effect is unnerving because in 'the return of the dead as the undead' they 'disrupt the crucial defining line which separates 'real' life from the 'unreality' of death' (69).

Throughout the duration of the novel, Harker, Mina, Dr. Seward and later Van Helsing stress the importance of recording all details of the events so that nothing will be forgotten or misrepresented. These efforts are collective as well. If one of the many voices that narrate the tale falters in his or her dedication to full disclosure, there is often another voice to insist on the importance of doing so. For example, shaken from his experience at the castle, Harker is hesitant to reveal all of the details recorded in his journal. Dr. Seward, a psychologist and co-conspirator in Dracula's destruction, effectively argues the importance of presenting all facts:

Because it is a part of the terrible story, a part of poor dear Lucy's death and all that led to it; because in the struggle which we have before us to rid the earth of this terrible monster we must have all the knowledge and all the help we can get.

(Stoker 246-247)

In the eyes of a late-nineteenth century reader, such is the epitaph of the imperial age and the birth of 'new imperialism'. According to Timothy Parsons, the concept of 'formal empire' lost favor throughout Europe and the Americas because a spirit of 'natural rights as citizens of a nation' gained favor, one which deemed the degrading and often violent imperial strategies of the past abhorrent. Relying on the strength of trade relations and a stable economic history, the people of Britain in particular, accepted the loss of its colonies, since the majority of the public – as well as numerous politicians – saw them as not only a drain on the economy but a sign of moral bankruptcy (293). However, in the wake of the Depression of 1873, the threat of losing its position among other leading nations reignited Britain's interest in a 'new imperialism'. This time, it ameliorated the moral prejudices that overshadowed the signifier of empire by framing its efforts as humanitarian in helping 'backward peoples' and also as heroic in its pursuit to restore national pride (291-295). Rather than a political platform, proponents of 'new imperialism' relied upon narrative to gain public support; newspapers and popular novels created the landscape within which many of the working class could act out a heroic quest. Parsons states that the 'resulting wave of popular enthusiasm generated by this celebration of empire meant that there was very little real political debate over the nature and merits of the new imperialism' (299). By eliminating the direct confrontation with the Other as the primary tactic of empire building, 'new imperialism' made empire more about the conqueror than the conquered. This was a change in tactics but not in policy. Fighting for 'good against evil' was largely a more successful campaign than the fight for an increasingly fractured national identity.

Later that same day, Mina writes in her journal that a timely account of the day's events must be written down in order to create a collective memory: 'We must be ready for Dr. Van Helsing when he comes [...] I think if we get all our material ready, and have every item put in chronological order, we shall have done much' (Stoker 248). Once it has been

compiled, Mina, Harker, Arthur, Dr. Seward and Van Helsing each receive a copy of the history. Arthur, Lucy's fiancé, states: 'I don't quite see the drift of it; but you people are all so good and kind, and have been working so earnestly and so energetically, that all I can do is to accept your ideas blindfold and try to help you' (Stoker 254). In this profession of trust, one cannot but hear the echoes of Mr. Swales' voice asking why, and to what end, the master history has been compiled. Eric Kwan-Wai Yu writes that Mina's reliance on prescribed texts, compiling them as an effect of 'type-writer syndrome', betrays her 'obsession with classification and documentation' and rather than proving a strength, reveals weakness in her intellectual capacity compared to her male counterparts (158-159). Unfairly, this reading ignores the collective fervor to create compilation, one shared by the Western male characters. The text demonstrates that as the danger of Dracula's power increases, the protagonists' obsession with accurately recording the battle with evil intensifies, even with the men. Dr. Seward's journal reads: 'Let me put down with exactness all that has happened, as well as I can remember it, since last I made an entry. Not a detail that I recall must be forgotten; in all calmness I must proceed' (Stoker 30). Dr. Van Helsing believes that hope of victory lies in full knowledge: 'Go on, friend Arthur. We want no more concealments. Our hope now is in knowing all. Tell freely!' (Stoker 317). To Mina he adds: '[...] poor, dear, dear Madam Mina—tell us exactly what happened. God knows that I do not want that you be pained; but it is need that we know all' (Stoker 318).

However, the intensity of belief in narrative cannot save it from the doubt that consumes its storytellers. While each is positive of his or her account of the events, confidence in the ability of the history to capture the reality of the unreal and supernatural experiences contained therein, soon fractures. Tzvetan Todorov discusses this hesitation in his book, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. He writes:

In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, a world without devils, sylphides, or vampire, there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination—and laws of the world then remain what

they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality—but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us ... The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty. (25)

Dracula's presence in the Western world is an uncanny intrusion that disturbs the image the West has of its history, its politics and its identity. This fracturing is not necessarily a crisis but a shift in perspective; it embodies what Bakhtin would later term *heteroglossia* and the dialogic. In the end, Harker's voice, one of the first to exhibit a strong reliance upon texts for context, observes in the closing entry a lapse in their reliability:

I took the papers from the safe where they have been ever since our return so long ago. We were struck with the fact that, in all the mass of material of which the record is composed, there is hardly one authentic document! nothing but a mass of type-writing, except the later note-books of Mina, Seward, and myself, and Van Helsing's memorandum. (Stoker 421)

When faced with their double, the Western characters sense the erosion of their histories and desperately attempt to construct replacement narratives. Alison Milbank writes that the fantastic narratives about which Todorov writes, including *Dracula*, 'are all from the period following the Enlightenment in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and so are exactly coterminous with the rise of the Gothic' (160). She adds that 'the state of hesitation over the reality of one's perceptions is thus not a clumsy device for the assertion of rationalism over superstition but an exploration of the complex nature of reality, and a means of mediating between the world and the self' (160). When faced with an uncanny double, the Self must also negotiate with a newly realized yet complex relationship. In the mediation of reality and fantasy, where authenticity fails to encompass this complex relationship, one must look for authority, and where none exists, it must be created.

Paul Ricoeur explores the idea of history as a construction in *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004). What surfaces is the myriad of voices present in the narrative of history:

This aporia, which we can call that of the truth in history, becomes apparent through the fact that historians frequently construct different and opposed

narratives about the same events. Should we say that some omit events and considerations that others focus on and vice versa? The aporia would be warded off if we could add rival versions to one another, allowing for submitting the proposed narratives to the appropriate corrections. Shall we say that it is life, presumed to have the form of a history, that confers the force of truth on this narrative? But life is not a history and only wears this form insofar as we confer it upon it [...] If the contrast between history and fiction were to disappear, both would lose their specific mark, namely, the claim to truth on the side of history and the “voluntary suspension of disbelief” on that of fiction. (Ricoeur 242)

Ricoeur posits an interesting remedial approach to reconciling contradictory perspectives that emerge over time regarding historical events and figures. His support of a juxtaposition of different accounts aligns with what M.M. Bakhtin encourages when interpreting language and narrative. In his book *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1981), Bakhtin states that his notion of *heteroglossia*, the blending of many voices, means that each character ‘can enter the novel, each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships’ (263). Taking this idea a step further into an analysis of the narrative of culture is Žižek’s notion of the parallax view. Žižek develops his argument so that the parallax view is contextualized into three separate yet related spheres. Looking at an object from an opposite perspective provides a greater context and is, in general, the parallax view. First is what he calls *ontological parallax* which is the means by which one comes to understand ‘reality’. According to Žižek, this is the philosophical facet of parallax, how one approaches reality as a principle and discourse. Second, is *scientific parallax*, which is the term for the tension between scientific reason and visceral intuition. Where scientific methods can demonstrate cause and effect relationships for seemingly unexplainable results, often bordering upon the supernatural, Žižek asserts that there yet remains an element of parallax that cannot be accounted for and therefore acts to complete even scientific understandings of the world, even so far as to provide a binary. However, the parallax view does not support binaries; rather, it requires an oscillation between perspectives that solidifies a relationship of symbiosis amid superficial and seemingly opposed concepts.

Žižek calls this space the ‘parallax gap’. Lastly, *political parallax* examines the social function of binaries, particularly within class divisions (Žižek 10).

Treated in the context of the theories discussed above, the narrative structure of *Dracula* emerges as more than a preservation of both individual and collective histories: the novel is a manual in constructing authenticity. *Dracula*’s use of multiple narrators provides the blending of voices which Bakhtin acknowledges in his engagement with the dialectic, while the characters’ reliance upon narrative as a means of locating and legitimizing reality allows them to recover an authentic image of the Self. Indeed, the compiling of each account is an intertextual act that brings about the *heteroglossia* within the text. Conversely, this compilation also acts as a layering of a single perspective echoed by several voices. While multiple accounts are presented within the novel, the corpus of their message is a unifying one that serves to restore the fractured Self. Importantly, the presence of dated, personal, eye-witness accounts that the journal entries and letters provide, creates a cooperative history supported by corresponding dates and observations. This history legitimizes the perspective of recorded events, and, therefore, appeals to the empirical explanation of the supernatural events that occur in the Gothic genre. The plurality of narrative voices further aids this representation of authority while at the same time accounting for the individual experience each character uniquely records, thereby personalizing the visceral experience of terror.

As an embodiment of Žižek’s *scientific parallax*, then, *Dracula* encourages its reader to approach the novel as an oscillation, moving between perception of fact and individual emotional response. In this ‘parallax gap’, one can accept dual realities and conflicting loyalties. The fact that this experience is captured in the Gothic novel offers an opportunity to consider ‘reality’ through the parallax view of fiction, where competing realities can be tolerated. The Gothic is located in the parallax gap. Lacan calls this space the *extimité*, ‘where the most intimate interiority coincides with the exterior and becomes threatening, provoking horror and anxiety’, Mladen Dolar explains, adding that such feelings can be traced back to the uncanny double (64). The characters in *Dracula* appear keenly aware of such dialogic discord. However, despite the affinity the novel has

with post-structural theories of the dialogical, the protagonists are shown to be uncomfortable with competing histories. The encounter with the double threatens the existence of the Self as the image of the West is challenged by its own colonial construction, the Eastern Other personified by Dracula. Attempts by the characters to create a genuine account of their experience only results in the unraveling of the history, so that at the end, what they have assembled cannot be considered authentic. It is a simulacrum of the real, a compilation of collective perceptions framed by a desire to control the unknown.

Count Dracula's foreign status is a text that the Western protagonists must consume if it is to be conquered. A reframing of the unfamiliar must be projected collectively in familiar terms. To counteract the power of the uncanny in transforming authenticity, the characters must engage with the imaginary. Specifically, the construction of history and narrative facilitates this negotiation. This is the primary function of the journals and diary accounts. They contain the foreign foe and the terror he imposes upon London and the circle of friends in particular. An inability to construct a narrative that authoritatively confines Dracula would signal the East's victory over the cognitive and the unconscious, both sites of vulnerability for the West. Using narrative to support its causes and to defeat its enemies, the texts and contexts of the West assert authority over potential invaders when accurate histories prove inaccessible. This is achieved by consuming the histories of the East. Count Dracula provides Harker with a brief genealogy of the people of Transylvania. Thus, Dracula's oration carries an authority gained by his position of power over Harker. The increasingly terror-filled voice of the West yields to Dracula's tale:

‘We Szekelys have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many brave races who fought as the lion fights, for lordship. Here, in the whirlpool of European races, the Ugric tribe bore down from Iceland the fighting spirit which Thor and Wodin gave them, which their Berserkers displayed to such fell intent on the seaboard of Europe, aye, and of Asia and Africa, too, till the peoples thought that the were-wolves themselves had come. Here, too, when they came, they found the Huns, whose warlike fury had swept the earth like a living flame,

till the dying peoples held that in their veins ran the blood of those old witches, who, expelled from Scythia, had mated with the devils in the desert. Fools, fools! What devil or what witch was ever so great as Attila, whose blood is in these veins? [...] the Szekelys were claimed as kindred by the victorious Magyars, and to us for centuries was trusted the guarding of the frontier of Turkeyland; aye, and more than that, endless duty of the frontier guard, for, as the Turks says, “water sleeps, and enemy is sleepless” [...] When was redeemed that great shame of my nation, the shame of Cassova, when the flags of the Wallach and the Magyar went down beneath the Crescent; who was it but my own race who as Voivode crossed the Danube and beat the Turk on his own ground! This was Dracula indeed ...’

(Stoker 31-32)

Edward Said states that *Orientalism* as a discipline has historically grouped all nations and cultures of the East together and approached them systematically as a unit: ‘Islam excepted, the Orient for Europe was until the nineteenth century a domain with a continuous history of unchallenged Western dominance’ (73). Dracula’s own account, then, displays shadows of Western perspective represented by the blending of identities in ‘the whirlpool of European races’ that are commingled into one race, the Szekelys, and further confined to one persona, Count Dracula. Adding to the validity of this claim is Dracula’s undead nature as a vampire. He not only embodies the lives and histories of his victims, but also literally transfuses their blood into his own veins. Thus, while at first it appears that Dracula controls his own narrative in this retelling of his history, there are traces of a perceived Orient as a conglomeration of indistinguishable identities, all of which are engrossed in one bloodline, in violence and in death.

Contributing to the creation of this specific history is perhaps Stoker’s awareness, if not reliance, upon another famous history, *The History*, as recorded by Herodotus. The ancient text presents the evolution of empires of the East. One noteworthy tribe that acts as a constant thread throughout the work is the Scythians, who as Dracula mentions, are one of many nations whose bloodline flows through his. Book Four of *The History* focuses its gaze on both the conflicting histories of the tribe and upon its traditions and

customs. Perhaps the most poignant parallel between the customs of the tribe and Dracula's behavior is demonstrated by a Scythian act of war:

As concerns war, this is how it is among them. When a Scythian kills his first man, he drinks his blood; of all of those he kills in battle he carries the heads to the king. (Herodotus IV.64)

Herodotus goes on to explain that after he has killed, the head of the victim must be carried to the king. Thereafter, the head is scalped and the flesh used as a trophy, displayed on the bridle of his horse. Other times, warriors would weave the scalps into their clothing, creating a second skin composed of many men: 'The skin of a man, it would seem, is thick and bright—indeed in point of whiteness, the brightest of all skins' (Herodotus IV.64). The descriptions of the Count's skin emphasize his pale skin tone through language. In his first encounter with Dracula, Harker notes 'the backs of his hands [...] had seemed rather white and fine' (Stoker 20). According to Dr. Seward, Dracula's 'white aquiline nose' and 'white sharp teeth' form his 'hellish look' (Stoker 313). The lifeblood Dracula consumes does not show on his skin; instead, like the trophies the Scythians fashioned from the skins of their victims, Dracula's skin acts as a second skin, 'the brightest of all skins' and a patchwork of human souls. That he drinks the blood of his victims is a political act transfused throughout the generations of his race. He professes with great satisfaction the trail of carnage his line has created for centuries. Thus, while many attribute the drinking of blood in the novel as a sexual element of the Gothic, it is equally, and perhaps more accurately, an act of war.

For the West, this is a war of the words. When Harker and his fellow protagonists are confronted by Dracula as an uncanny double, the sinister reflection they see as a result of his counter-invasion threatens to destabilize the narrative of the Self, not only for the individual characters but also for the West as a former imperial authority. Where once mimicry was not only accepted but encouraged, subsequently the Eastern Other and its presentation of an undesirable mirroring of the West creates anxiety and instability. As Dracula is a figure of the supernatural, an element of the imaginary that defines the uncanny in literature, Harker and his inner circle must furiously re-imagine and reconstruct an authentic and empiric reality to counter the unsettling spectre of the

familiar strange and deflect images of an undesirable self. Consequently, Harker acts as a neo travel guide, oscillating between the West and the East in an effort to recover stable and authoritative boundaries between Self and Other. This is demonstrated by the Orientalist stereotypes that permeate the text, especially those of barbarism. Indeed, in overtaking and consuming Dracula's geneology through its retelling, Harker transforms the Count from an uncanny dark double into an indistinguishable member of a wholly unfamiliar Eastern identity. This relocation within Dracula's own narrative distances him from Harker as a double figure. Consequently, the West reasserts its authority over its more sinister self by returning it to a primitive state, one plagued by a history of war. Ironically, as Freud suggests, this return is a return of the double to a benign state. Once again, the Other acts as an essential binary that affirms the Self. The West has avoided the incriminating gaze of its imperial reflection and constructed a milieu where 'new imperialist' agendas emerge. The recovery of this 'authentic' self has created new narratives, new epitaphs which resurrect old dogmas. Yet, it is difficult to completely eclipse 'that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known' (Freud 124), or to forget that what becomes un-dead is destined to become frighteningly familiar.

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